



MINUTES OF THE MILLVILLE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

February 14, 2023 @ 7:00 PM

1. **Call to Order:**

Mayor Belinko called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the **Pledge of Allegiance**. **Present:** Mayor Ronald Belinko, Council Members Sharon Brienza, Barbara Ryer, Robert Wisgirda and Pete Michel. Administrative Assistant Eileen Scerra, Town Clerk Wendy Mardini, Code Enforcement Officer Eric Evans, and Finance Director Lisa Wynn were also present. Town Manager Debbie Botchie appeared via online phone.

2. **Approval of Minutes:** *Council Member Pete Michel made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 10, 2023 meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Bob Wisgirda. Council Members Brienza and Ryer were absent from the January 10, 2023 meeting, therefore abstained from voting on this matter. Motion carried 3-0-2.*

Council Member Sharon Brienza made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2023 meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Barbara Ryer. Motion carried 5-0.

3. **Financial Report:**

January 2023:

General Fund Revenue \$117,215.00

General Fund Expenditures \$80,261.00

Restricted Revenue \$111,542.00

Restricted Expense \$101,566.00

Ms. Ryer also pointed out that general interest on CD's is \$2,534.00 and the restricted interest income is \$10,475.00. Also, the Town purchased another CD for \$250,000.00.

4. **Administrative Matters – Prepared by Town Manager Deborah Botchie**

Administrative Assistant Eileen Scerra read the Administrative Report. Ms. Scerra summarized the report as follows:

- Motion sensor lights have been installed behind the maintenance building at Evans Park.

- Two new security cameras have been installed at the entrances and one by the pavilion in Evans Park.
- The pavilion is still on schedule with completion in March.
- Zip Code Issue: The Town received a letter from Edward Williamson, District Manager A, United States Postal Service denying the Town's request to change the zip code boundaries for Millville. We are getting information for an appeal.
- Website: Work with our Inclind representatives have been going smoothly and with much progress.

Andrew Lyons of GMB Engineering presented a drone video of the building progress in the Town, including Schooner Cove, Endless Summer Drive, Egret Shores, Peninsula Village, Tupelo Sands and the water tower.

5. **Citizens Privilege:** Ms. Georgia Murtaugh, 31625 White Clay Drive, Millville, DE (Coventry)

Ms. Murtaugh started out by asking the Council to “step up their game” when it comes to inspections. She is very concerned with how fast the homes are being built. Ms. Murtaugh said that a lot of these houses discover problems after they have been built. People are going back to the builders for help but some issues don't get addressed. Ms. Murtaugh suggested that the Council keep a watch over the building inspector himself to watch what he is doing. She is also concerned about the garbage that blows into her yard and yards of others and concerned about how fast the homes are being built.

Ms. Murtaugh stated that she knows the Town has a lot of money. She voiced concern about initiating a full-time police department sometime in the future and she requested that the Town does not. She stated that the State Police do a fine job now and if we get a police department, taxes will go up considerably and it is not necessary. In response, Mayor Belinko explained that he and Ms. Botchie recently met with the new Captain of Troop 4 and she advised that she will do the best she can for coverage in our area, however, there are shortages within the police, it may become difficult in the future.

Mr. David Holmes, 33701 Tudor Place, Millville, DE (Millville by the Sea)

Mr. Holmes stated that he attended the tax assessment workshop a few weeks earlier. He is concerned about the taxing of common area assets of HOA's. Mr. Holmes stated that the County Code precludes Sussex County from taxing the HOA assets. The County does assess them, but they are precluded from taxing them. He went on to say that when he asked the Town Council why we were not receiving the same exemption, it was suggested that he speak to the Town solicitor, Seth Thompson, Esq., to get some clarification. He also spoke with Todd Lawson from Sussex County and Mr. Lawson

thought it was pretty clear that the Town should not be taxing the HOA assets. Mr. Thompson explained that the language in the exemption is the same for the Town and the County, there does need to be an application for the exemption. Mr. Thompson also assured Mr. Holmes that he was going to sit down with Ms. Botchie and get this straightened out.

Mr. Holmes' second point had to do with the budget and financial statement. He started out by saying that he wanted to commend the Town on a great financial statement, saying it was "unbelievable" that the assets were in the area of \$16 million and liabilities in the area of \$400,000. He commented that if you read through the recommendations of the Government Financial Officers Association which is a national group that helps municipalities in management and operations of Town operations they recommend a minimum of 2 months of operating expenses and higher depending on the size of the municipalities. Mr. Holmes said he did a few calculations and in his opinion the Town has something like "6 – 6.5 years, instead of a couple of months expenses" and if you take out the line on contingency of \$550,000 that has been unused for a year, "it looks like that was almost a plug number to balance the budget, leaving over 10 years worth of expenses." Mr. Thompson encouraged Mr. Holmes to look at the Town's audit report that is prepared every year, pointing out that some of those funds are restricted. Mr. Holmes stated that he was referring to the "unrestricted" expenses. He also claims that the Town is making money "hand over fist here, it's incredible that the Town is beating the budget." He also pointed out that the Town exceeded the revenue in nine months which was projected by 150%, saying that that will go up in the next three months due to incoming transfer tax on units sold in Millville by the Sea alone. He projects that there will be an additional \$100,000.00 added to the annual budget and the Town will beat the expense budget by not only the entire contingency, but the baseline \$1,015,000.00 coming in, so we got lots of money.

Mr. Holmes also questioned the FDIC limit or insurance regarding list of CD's that the Town has, questioning the interest and insurance coverage. Finance Director Lisa Wynn briefly explained to Mr. Holmes about the interest accrued and not earned. Mr. Holmes suggested that the Town reevaluate the bank's policies regarding the matured amount. Mayor Belinko suggested that Mr. Holmes look at the audit report which is posted on the website. The Mayor also commented that when the audit report was posted and voted on at the Town Council meeting, there was not one person in the audience and no questions regarding the same.

Mayor Belinko stated that the audit is online for anyone to review, and he encouraged any resident to make an appointment with the Town Manager Debbie Botchie and/or Finance Director Lisa Wynn who will be happy to sit down and answer any questions anyone may have.

6. **Appointments:**

Mayor Belinko appointed, with confirmation from the Town Council, the Board of Election Commission for the 2023 Annual Municipal Election.

Town Clerk Wendy Mardini swore-in the following residents as Board of Election Commissioners:

- A. Pat Guilday
- B. Jim Marshall
- C. Debbie Myer

Council Member Brienza made a motion to approve the appointments for the Board of Election Commission for the 2023 Annual Municipal Election. The motion was seconded by Council Member Pete Michel. The motion was carried unanimously 5-0.

7. **New Business**

A. Discuss, consider and possible vote on Millville by The Sea - Seagull Village amendment to the Approved Subdivision Plat Plan.

Council Members Sharon Brienza and Robert Wisgirda recused themselves from this discussion and possible vote.

Mr. Rod Hart spoke on behalf of Ardent Companies, owner of Millville by the Sea. He spoke about Village Two, now referred to as Seagull Village, which was previously approved. He explained that they went through the recording process and found out that a very small sliver of one home encroached on the Summer Wind Village HOA property by approximately 20'. Mr. Hart further explained that he went before the Planning and Zoning Commission and asked to "slide" down those certain Villa homes which are 20 foot wide and slide that down 23.08 feet. He said that he is here tonight to request that adjustment to the plan, which is not changing the unit count, not changing the size of the units, just sliding it down from the north to the south by 23 feet and moving the walking path from the north of the tax ditch to the south. Mr. Lyons from GMB had no problem with the change. Council Member Barbara Ryer asked if the density was changed for this section and Mr. Lyons responded that it was not.

Council Member Barbara Ryer made a motion to approve Millville by the Sea-Seagull Village amendment to the Approved Subdivision Plat Plan. The motion was seconded by Council Member Pete Michel.

Role Call was requested by Mayor Belinko:

<i>Peter Michel</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Barbara Ryer</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Ronald Belinko`</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Sharon Brienza</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
<i>Ron Wisgirda</i>	<i>Abstain</i>

Motion carried unanimously 3-0-2.

B. Discuss, consider and possible vote on Resolution 23-10 regarding property tax relief for the property owners in the Town of Millville.

Council Member Barbara Ryer presented the proposed Resolution. She gave some general background regarding tax collection. Ms. Ryer began by stating that property taxes are collected by municipalities generally for public schools, libraries, industry infrastructure, employee salaries, parks, police, fire department and maintenance. She went on to say that the Town of Millville needs tax money for only for salaries, but the operating expenses of the Town including the cost of our police, which is the Delaware State Police, the Millville Park, donations to the Millville Fire Department. These are some of the things that are important to the Council and residents. She went on to say that “I think we understand the hardship of the businesses and the residents, what they faced in the last two years, between the economic inflation in our country and the recent pandemic.” In addition, “Sussex County is going to be reassessing our homes that haven’t been done for 39 years.” She went on by saying that Sussex County did their presentation here a few weeks back. They pledged that they would not raise our taxes for the first year only. Ms. Ryer shared the facts that she gathered. She stated that the Town's operating budget is approximately \$1.573 million out of general funds, that's budgeted for salaries. But the part of that budget for salaries is about \$594,000.00, which is about 38%, which is average, it's not above average for most budgets. Ms. Ryer went on to say that as of January 31st, Lisa shows on the financial reports that she gave me, the Town has collected approximately a little over one and a half million dollars in revenue, other than the municipal taxes, which average about \$659,000 in real estate. So that's a total of \$1.8 million. The Town has approved construction of approximately 2,000 homes to be built, which conservatively will provide approximately \$600,000 in additional general fund revenue based on a conservative average of \$300.00 a house for real estate tax. The same 2,000 homes will also provide revenue in excess of \$9 million dollars which is a conservative figure of \$5,000.00 a home, that goes into restricted income. The restricted money covers the cost of our longtime reserve study, the payment to the police and capital improvements. Millville by the Sea still has quite a few more homes to be built.

Ms. Ryer pointed to the nation’s economic condition right now, pointing out that money will probably be coming in years down the road, but once the land is gone, the money's gone. “Anybody with a brain knows that.” She reminded the public about the HOA fees that are paid. Those fees pay for your roads, your snow removal, your sidewalks your streetlights, Town does not pay for that, and Sussex County pays for the main roads

along with DelDOT, it is not coming out of the Town's money. Ms. Ryer stated in summary that the Town of Millville has zero debt, is in financially sound condition as shown by this month's financial report with \$10.4 million in unrestricted funds and \$5.8 million in restricted funds. She went on to explain that the tax break she is asking for residents and businesses is not intended to change your lives because half of what you pay for our taxes will not change your life. It is the principle behind it. She said that the Town employees were awarded ARPA money last year for COVID pay which came out of federal money, not the resident's taxes. Those funds were given to the State of Delaware, for premium pay for eligible workers performing essential work for the hardship caused by COVID. That is why we received that money; the Town remained open for business and did not stop operating. Therefore, the Council truly felt that the employees deserved to get that money. She added that she felt that the residents should get something as well. Ms. Ryer said that she drafted this Resolution back in October of 2022 and was asked to hold it until February or March. She felt that it was critical to approve the Resolution tonight, so that the information can be included in the fiscal year 2024 budget figures, which will provide the Town with sound information for fiscal responsibility as required by the Town Charter. Ms. Ryer also stated that there should be no reason that the Town cannot continue to support the same donation to the Millville Fire Department. She then requested that the Council approve this Resolution to cut the taxes in half to \$.25 cents per \$100.00 of assessment, which totals \$329,438.

Council Member Bob Wisgirda commented by commending Ms. Ryer on this Resolution for tax relief. He stated that in these past four months, he knows that Ms. Ryer put a heck of a lot of man hours regarding this along with Lisa Wynn, the Town's Financial Director and Town Manager Debbie Botchie along with our Town Solicitor, Seth Thompson. In Mr. Wisgirda's opinion, Ms. Ryer has "gone above and beyond to make sure all the I's are dotted and T's are crossed. I mean, it's commendable." Having had to put this off now for four months, he believed this needed to be acted on tonight for it to be effective this year. He did not want to see this put off any longer. He said that a decision should be made by Council tonight. Mr. Wisgirda further stated that this would lead up to a situation that some surrounding towns failed to plan as far as their finances for the future. The future is what is coming down the line. There is already one community in our area that has had to double their taxes 100% in two years. He added that the reassessment had not even gone through yet so "you can see what the future is bringing." Mr. Wisgirda said that he was "very adamant that this should be definitely acted upon tonight."

Mayor Belinko added that he was not opposed to lowering the tax rate. However, at this point we are in the middle of a budget process and there is a Town Charter to consider. Our Charter outlines the basis for presenting the budget and the tax rate on the Charter that the Town abides by. If we vote to deviate from this Charter, it's a small thing that will become a larger thing. The budget process is really in play right now. The Town Manager is going over the needs of the Town and once that is done, they take a look at the assessment. The assessment is run by Sussex County, the Town of Millville does not have an assessment department. After that process the budget is presented to Council.

The council will make some adjustments and in between you have an executive session talking about salaries and benefits for our staff, we have three more staff members than we had last year. After that process, the budget becomes a public hearing. In between, it's not good if you have an election. If the Resolution is approved tonight, that restricts any new Council members in developing this overall budget. Mayor Belinko said that he is not opposed to any decrease, but you have to look at the total picture after the budget and after the reassessment. He said that he was asked by a reporter after that meeting if he was going to lower the taxes once the assessments are in? He didn't want to give an answer at that time but most likely the Town would be able to do that. He said that there is a process for our budget in the Charter and he feels that we should follow that process.

Mayor Belinko further commented that the Town of Millville has not raised taxes in years. Further explaining that the reserve is there for a reason. He suggests that the residents look at the Town's Comprehensive Plan. There are some things in here that the residents want but we are not going to do right away. Such as a transportation system with DART, sidewalks, more landscaping supplies at the park, etc. In 5 to 10 years, we cannot rule out a police department depending on the rate of growth.

Eric Evans added that since we have never had a park before, we do not have all the equipment needed for park maintenance. For instance, he said that the Town has no fertilizer, no weed killer, no mulch, no trailer, no sprayers or storage for all those items. More tools are needed for the park, the Town has spent approximately \$7,000.00 to date. The Grounds and Maintenance personnel have been using personal tools for getting things done. Mayor Belinko pointed out that all this will be included in the FY24 budget.

The Mayor also pointed out that transfer tax is slowing down tremendously. Lisa Wynn noted that building permit revenue has dropped \$233,000.00 and transfer tax is down \$224,000.00 year to date.

Ms. Ryer stated that her Resolution is for one fiscal year, "it's not forever, just by one fiscal year for a total of \$330,000.00." Mayor Belinko suggested that the Town sticks to their Charter and follow the process. Mr. Wisgirda commented that he thinks this will in no way affect the process. He says that there are a lot of citizens out there that are suffering, who had small businesses that have had zero help. This may not seem like a lot but an extra \$100.00 could be very meaningful and he could not see how this decision would be detrimental to the Charter. Ms. Ryer said that she thought it would help the process because now you are prepared for what you need for FY24 to be fiscally sound, and she does not see how it can hurt the FY24 budget.

Mr. Seth Thompson wanted to briefly go over the Charter process for the public that will happen at the next regular meeting in March. The Town Manager must present the Town Manager's budget and then the Council gets to weigh in on that. The budget must have a certain number of components. It's not just the tax rate, it really is all sources of income and then all revenues. The Town Manager presents the budget at the March

meeting. The Council then gives feedback, there will be a public hearing, and then it needs to be passed before May 1. It needs to pass at one of the April meetings, because May 1st is the start of the fiscal year. That is how the process works. The tax rate is one of those numbers. If the Resolution passes, then the Town Manager must factor in this rate in preparing the Town Manager's budget. The Council then reviews that, and it becomes part of the larger budget discussion.

Sharon Brienza commented that she is not opposed to any tax relief. She felt that it must be done during our budget discussions, that's when it should happen according to Ms. Brienza. She went on to say that she does not believe this Council should tie the hands of the next Council, before they have any input into their budget. Currently, the Town has a 100% collection rate, which means everyone has paid their taxes. Ms. Brienza also pointed out that the Town wants to put additional security upgrades in Evans Park and the municipal building. She also pointed out that the City of Lewes recently had to cut their budget because their transfer taxes weren't as high as they had anticipated. They are growing as fast as we are, if not faster and I would really hate to get into that same situation.

Mayor Belinko wanted to point out that during the budget process there is a public hearing. There will be a chance to hear from residents across the board before the Council decides on adopting that budget and setting the tax rate. He reiterated that he was not opposed to reducing taxes, but going through the process will give everyone a chance to see it done the right way.

Mr. Wisgirda added that he did not see how this is tying anybody's hands. He said that if anything, this may even be giving notice for the budgetary process to look to the future. None of us can predict what is going to happen tomorrow or next week or next month. He said to at least put them on notice that we can't go and start overspending, that it's about time we looked at the future. We must plan for the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years.

Debbie Botchie spoke via phone. She commented that everyone has made some good points about this issue. She said that the Town has \$16 million in the reserves and that it took many years and a lot of work and a lot of planning. She acknowledged that the Town will start diving into those resources sooner than you think. But as the Town Manager, it is imperative that she listen to the Code and Building staff as well as her Finance Director. She continued that over the last few months, she has been kept in the loop on the drop of building permits being issued due to the decline in the housing market. There was a staff meeting to talk about the upcoming FY24 year. Eric Evans, her current Code Official, stated to her that he was concerned about the drop in building permit revenue, which will also affect our building permit review revenue in FY 24. Mr. Evans said that our building permit revenues would most likely drop by 50%. She referred to the revenue that we collected up to January 31st. Our tax revenue equates to about 30% of the revenue received. Ms. Botchie went on to say that we received an extremely high amount of subdivision fees, which was \$205,000.00 for several subdivisions in FY 23. She said that the Town will not be seeing that in FY24 pursuant

to the developers. She said she realized that this issue has caused a lot of pressure on this Council as it is an election year. However, the Council has the ultimate decision on this matter. Ms. Botchie was hopeful this subject would be raised at a different time when she would be able to present to the Council a proposed budget with hopefully realistic expense and revenue figures.

Mr. Pete Michel commented on the subject by saying that he agreed with Ms. Brienza 100%.

Mayor Belinko said that he has a responsibility to all of Millville. He said that he can honestly say that he could not vote on this subject tonight. He said that he would like to see this tabled until discussion during the budget process. He advised the residents that they will receive a survey from the Park Commission on what they would like to see at the park. If we start dipping into reserve funds, some of these things from the wish list that comes in from our residents is not going to take place. He went on to say that the Town has a Comprehensive Plan that we are going to be updating in another year, that's force of law. He reiterated that he was not against tax relief at this point, but he will face that issue when the Council looks at the total process as outlined in our Charter. Ms. Brienza also said that she would have no problem tabling this until the budget was discussed, while discussing the tax rate at the same time.

Mayor Belinko said that during the process there will be a public hearing to help the Council make that decision. Mr. Thompson questioned if the thought was to have the Town Manager prepare a draft budget reflecting the current tax rate as well as this proposed tax rate. Ms. Brienza said that she would not want to put that kind of pressure on Ms. Botchie. She would just want her to create a budget that she thinks she can and give Council the opportunity to review same.

Mr. Wisgirda was concerned that by tabling this subject, there wouldn't be any tax relief or it wouldn't happen until a year from now. He wanted to know how soon anybody could expect some relief from this, being worried that it would be tabled and not brought up again.

Mayor Belinko said that the tax rate is set after your budget to see what the cost is and that's when we take a hard look at it and get total input from the community. Seth Thompson added that the tax rate gets set every year through the budget process.

The Mayor had one question for Lisa Wynn, which was "at this point, is it prudent to give tax relief at this point in the budget process?" Ms. Wynn said that she really believes in getting the true numbers and getting the budget balanced, setting the tax rate or even if you want to change it, it has to be during the budget process to be fiscally responsible.

Mayor Belinko made a motion to table this subject and schedule it during the budget process to have total input from everyone. Council Member Sharon Brienza seconded

the motion.

Roll call vote was requested by Mayor Belinko:

<i>Bob Wisgirda</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Ronald Belinko</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Pete Michel</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Sharon Brienza</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Barbara Ryer</i>	<i>No</i>

The motion carried 3-2.

C. Discuss, consider and possible vote on Resolution 23-11 regarding the release of performance bond for “Beazer Homes, LLC” in the development known as “Bishop’s Landing Phase 1D” in the Town of Millville.

Mayor Ronald Belinko and Council Member Pete Michel recused themselves at this time.

Council Member Sharon Brienza took the gavel. Andrew Lyons said that there was nothing additional in his memo regarding the amenities in 1-D which consisted of the horseshoe pit, pergola and benches.

Council Member Barbara Ryer made a motion to approve Resolution 23-11. Council Member Bob Wisgirda seconded the motion.

Roll call vote was requested by Council Member Sharon Brienza

<i>Bob Wisgirda</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Ronald Belinko</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
<i>Pete Michel</i>	<i>Abstain</i>
<i>Sharon Brienza</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Barbara Ryer</i>	<i>Yes</i>

The motion carried 3-0-2

8. Citizens Privilege - Ms. Georgia Murtaugh, 31625 White Clay Drive, Millville, DE (Coventry)

Ms. Murtaugh stated “that y'all can't worry about worrying about putting it off. (tax relief) I mean, as far as upsetting new board coming in, stop it. You are here for us. Not the new board coming in. Y'all talk a lot about how you want to be, you know, fair and even minded. But that's why you're here for the people. Forget that. You are the people who live here, right now you represent us. Okay. You have to understand that. Mr. Mayor, you had a lot to say, now, let me speak, I know you're upset. But I'm gonna tell

you something. Okay. You didn't have to table that and wait for the next board to come. Actually, you could have done the same thing here and you chose not to. So, I'm glad that I saw this. I am very glad that I saw this because everybody that voted to table it, I think and I understand you've got to think it wouldn't have hurt you. It wouldn't have hurt you and it wouldn't have set a precedence. Okay, these are unusual times, you wait until the county comes down with their tax assessments. They're coming and they're going to do that because of the State. As you have seen, if you've been watching TV, everything that's going on in other states, they want money. And unfortunately, they're going to hurt taxpayers. It's always on the taxpayer. They never give anything back to the taxpayer. Okay, never. Y'all tabling it, you might as well just throw it in the garbage. And I know, I've seen it. I have seen it happen in our communities. I have ... you're cowards. You've got to stand up. You're here for us. Not the board that's coming in. You can't worry about offending the new board. You're here for us. Not the board that's coming in. You can't worry about offending the new board. You're here for us. Please, I want you to think about that. Okay. We never get a break. It just keeps going up and going up, slow down on the building a little bit then. If you're afraid about what's going to happen in the future, slow it down. Take a moratorium if you have to. I understand. I think the park was the best thing we ever did. Okay, be careful. Okay, slow down. You're doing the right thing. I like what you're doing over there. I really do. I have nine grandkids. I like what you're doing over there. All right. I convinced my daughter to move down here. She's a nurse, she works two full time jobs as a nurse, two, to support her family down here. All right, I'm going back to work. I just want you to remember, as far as the taxpayers, it wouldn't have killed you. It wouldn't have killed you to give us the money one time, because the county and the state when they talk about doing stuff for one year, wait only comes in and we are going to get ... Oh, you haven't been assessed in 39 years? Well, we got the money, we're doing the money, we're doing fine. They're looking for more money for their products. You want to keep you want to keep money. Okay, because of something else that you might want to spend on in the future? How about dealing with what we're dealing with now? Never mind your wish list for the future. Stop it. Okay, how about taking care of the people who live here now?

William Kessler, 24695 Parkview Street, Millville, DE (Parkside) – “I'd like to comment on the budget and the tax rate. I don't believe I can comment on the resolution tonight. But I'll say I think a vote should have been yea or nay on it. Not tabling. So, in regard to the tax rate, I think the citizens of the community should have a reduction in the tax rate going forward in the budget. There is a thing called a constant yield rate. And I think once these assessments come in the taxes, if the rate remains the same, are going to be quite high. So I think the citizens should get a break with the tax rate. And so, since I can't comment on the resolution tonight, I think it was a, we'll say a good endeavor, but you decided to table it. So, I have to honor that. Thank you.”

Sharon Brienza said that when the assessment comes in, the Council will have to take a hard look at those numbers.

Mr. David Holmes, 33701 Tudor Place, Millville, DE (Millville by the Sea) – “I would encourage everybody involved to get involved in the budget process issue. It's obvious that not very many people attended the prior budget. I see again, a \$555,000.00 contingency, totally unspent, that's a third of the budget. Who's putting together these numbers? This is absurd.”

Seth Thompson, Esq. commented that when the budget process goes through, typically the Finance Director and the Town Manager do a comparison from the year before in terms of actuals to projected. I don't think they're in that position to speak to that tonight. But the budget process would be when you probably look at this.

Mr. Holmes stated that he felt this was a clear plug to balance the budget and there was no other reasonable explanation.

Mr. Thompson reiterated that the Town Manager will present a draft budget next month. After that, the Council comments on the Town Manager's draft, and then there's a public hearing for additional comments when the public can attend.

9. **Announcement of next meeting:** February 28, 2023 (Chesapeake Utilities Natural Gas will be presenting.)

Council Member Barbara Ryer made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Sharon Brienza seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

Respectfully submitted,

Wendy Mardini
Town Clerk